

Reveries and Other Poems

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By Gottfried Hult

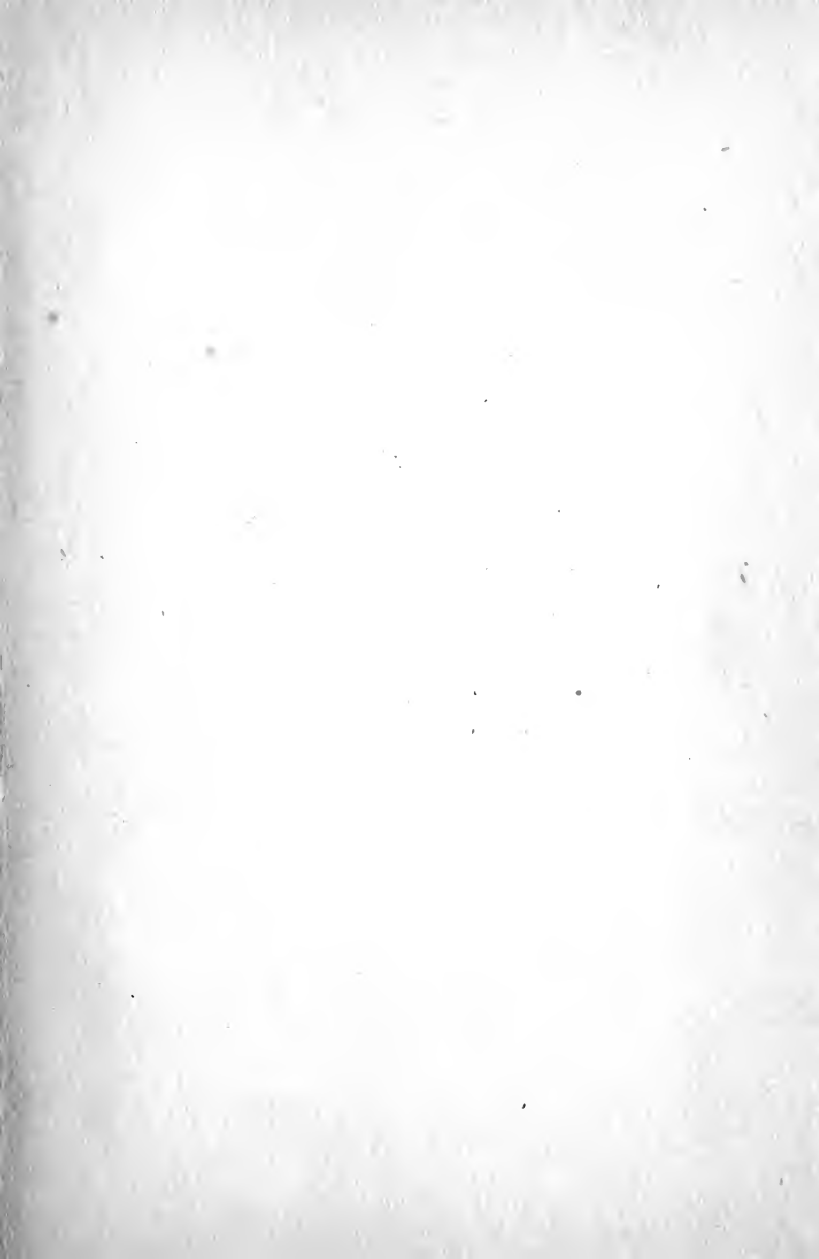


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By

Gottfried Hult

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To
MY WIFE



A number of the poems of this collection have appeared in the *Century*. The author is indebted to the editor of this magazine for the privilege of republishing.

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REVERIES

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Reveries and Other Poems

I SOUGHT ME SYMBOLS OF ETERNITY

I SOUGHT me symbols of Eternity:
And vasty deeps of heaven yielded glooms
And barren space, no furthest star illumes,—
Darkness! I sought mid mighty things that be
Uncomprehended within bounds: the sea,
Plumbless, unshored; aloft the westering light,
That plenary stillness, antedating night;
And day's long ebb in after-vacancy.
Yet even in these no perfect glass I saw
For imaging the mystery unblurred;
Nor entered into realms of ultimate awe,
Till drifting, drifting, wheresoever led
In aimless tides of revery I heard
Lear's fivefold "Never" o'er Cordelia dead.

IF SWART DEATH BE A GYPSY

AND if swart Death be a gypsy,
And Spirit a little child,
Whereof he reaves the mothering Earth,
Some night when the wind is wild,—

Crouched in the smouldering star-glow,
Or stretched before dawns ablaze,
Resting the vagrant feet, will it dream
Of the ancient ways and days?

THE MYTH-MAKER

TAKING the alien world into his soul
To pour it forth again in molten thought,
With his own throbbing self instinct and fraught—
Dryad and nymph, Zeus in the thunder's roll—
Man made his heart at home. The inert whole
Surrendering to his passionate assault
Of spirit, he could feel the star-sown vault
Domestically roof his joy and dole.
Cold, adamant, foreign to the will,
The infinite we gaze into responds
With no wild thrill of kinship as of yore:
Would the projected human self were still
Religion, so its passion but once more
Linked earth and sky in matrimonial bonds!

MATERNAL HEALING

A LITTLE child,
Stung by a clover-jostling bee,
Flees with its ache
To waiting mother-arms;
And mother-hands,
Beautiful heal-all mother-hands take loam,
A little cool moist loam, and therewith leech
The throbbing pain.

And I who pause,
Noting the tenderling's relief,
Wonder if so
Earth deal with us, her children
Of the tortured fate-stung heart;
If thus the cool loam-poultice in her soft
Mothering hand will ease the inward ache,—
The inward ache!

REVERY

SOMETIMES in autumn nights I sit and list,
When a little wind sufficeth to make known
How dry the leaves, and catch the undertone
Of dateless pain, the trivial day dismissed.
Then have I heard, when most the world is whist,
A far-off sea of anguish making moan
Into the ear of darkness, and alone
With a dead Strand bewailing lips it kissed.
And in that endless solitude of thought,
All things, to be and gone, became as one,—
That multitudinous sleep the past hath wrought,
And the encircling world that throbs and heaves:
And Life that drank so many a westering sun,
I heard as the sere exodus of leaves.

AS COUCHED AMID THE WAVES

AS couched amid the waves a bather lying—
Vacillant like the mariner's needle held
Beneath the crystal—sees within the deep
The white vague of his body, so I glimpse
The glinting image of the self I am,
Afloat in Time.—O liquid leisure! Fate
No more I heed than doth a stellar ray,
Which, travelling some millenniums, reaches earth
In the full blaze of noon. Mid plumbless years
Aswim with upturned face, I feel at last
The halcyon infinitudes of death;—
Bubbles, and haply I am I no more!

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

NIGHT, open thou the door!
I lift imploring hands.
A lost and fainting wayfarer before
The ebon portal stands.

I came a flinty way,
And I have wounds to nurse;
Shoot back the bolt: thou hast a salve, they say,
Might heal the Universe.

Thy tenants would not bar
For me the twilight gate:
Once long ago of Hush and Dew and Star
Was I the spirit mate.

Beneath the moon I trod
As one who doth betake
Himself into a silent fane unshod:
Thy slumberers will not wake.

Long vigils I have kept
Amid the winds and rain:
Ere Birth had summoned, in thy halls I slept;
There I would sleep again.

For I have learned that quest
But unattainment brings:
Here, here alone, Peace glows not distant, Rest
Has not elusive wings.

Aweary of the noise,
The strife for fame and bread,
I would drop life's remaining years like toys.—
Hast thou a dreamless bed?

The ancient couch that held
My limbs? the ancient room?
And canst thou spare me now, as once of old,
Somewhat of curtaining gloom?

And disenthral from need
Of ever waking more?
All-pitying Samaritan, I plead,
Night, open thou the door!

SONG

RICH night, luscious night,
Born of the sunk white moon!
Like fruit on a tangled blackberry briar
From the perished blooms of June.

Rich dream, luscious dream,
Born of the white Long Ago!
O wistful fruitage of memoried years,
Ripe among thorns of woe!

CHANGE

I SEARCHED for the Law Elemental, Reality's
marrow and pith,
And found but the things that shrivel all halcyon
dreams into myth:
Birth and death, the morrow, moon-wane, laughter
and tears,—
No coign of the universe fluxless, unsnared the mer-
curial years.

The hills everlasting are fickle, and melt like moment-
aged tones;
And graves with the sleepers beneath them suck
down the memorial stones;
Fens are born of the lake-blue, the lands familiar wax
strange;
And deserts where once flowed the ocean are burning
footprints of Change.

My brethren have imaged them heavens, suffused
with a stagnant bliss,
And yearned for a sea of crystal mid the hurtling
billows of this.

I would it were so! I am weary of surf-beat, an-
hungered for Goal:

But Change is the master of matter, and Change is
the tyrant of soul.

Beloved one, of whom I am tender as fleece of the
jewel it wraps,

Could I cling to thee, sing to thee ever, as the ages rise
and lapse!

But vain, my belovèd, our longing, though paired
through ether we range,

Or soon or late we must perish, the broken-winged
victims of Change.

PROMETHEUS

OH, better far to filch the spark of fire
From heaven and suffer the Promethean doom
Than scathless to exist as one in whom
A spirit dwells content with dust and mire!
Oh, better struggle for a high desire,
Too star-like high for winning, than assume
Low ease-won ends; yea, better far the tomb
Than barren life unlearning to aspire!
God purge me of inertness as of sin,
And let existence into life be thrilled;
Pour tempest on the stagnant soul within,
And let the sails of thought with storm be filled;
Grant mountain peaks of earthquake origin,
Whereon ideals their eagle-nests may build.

GROWTH

I PAUSED a moment, paused and mused, aweary of
 husbandry,
Weeding the soul of What Is, and planting What
 Ought To Be:
Matted with tares the acres—the myriad-rooted
 to-day
For an atom seed, to-morrow, plucked up and flung to
 the way.

In the toil-won tilth of spirit, the glebe too tardily
 broke,
What fens of passion undrained, charred trunks of
 desire that smoke;
Boulders of ancient habit, drifts that the glacial
 vast
Trundled o'er continents of life, ancestral æons
 past!

With the blood that shouted at morning stagnant at
noon like ooze,
Crushed with the unavailment of duties I did not
choose,
I dallied with dreams of cities, where pleasure is drunk
to the lees,
In the amphitheatres of sense and hanging gardens
of ease.

A moment! and loathing griped me, loathing with
swift recoil
To the flung-by spade and mattock, to the blessed-
ness of toil:
Yet scarce renewed was Purpose ere the heart again
was aware
That toward it groped the waneless, the ever-crescent
Despair.—

A clay-moulded beaker is matter, that breaking anni-
hilates quite;
But spirit is seed, millennial seed, fecund to rain and
light,
Abolished and reabolished, since the vernal summons
of Birth,
Yet Time outsummered, lo, what sheaves for the
primal dearth!

This is the cup of strength for who toils and moils in
the field;

This, the partaken-of bread, and guerdon of wheaten
yield.

For scarce-glimpsed Ends we immolate Self, our
sacrificial Lamb,

Yet I thank thee, God, thank thee with tears, as Man
I am not that I am!

AS ONE WHO TURNS A HUNGRY EAR TO LIST

AS one who turns a hungry ear to list,
And catch the heart-throb in a dying breast;
And holds a mirror to the lips to test
Whether a faintest breath reveal its mist;
And trembling feels about the pulseless wrist,
And scans the eyes o'er which the lids should rest,
Nor realises how in vain the quest,
And kissing clay still dreams the friend is kissed;—
I bend me o'er this wondrous world of mine,
This beauteous universe, and hark to win
Some evidence, some faintest hint or sign
Of God-pulsation going on within;
And still I watch and wait with bated breath,
Hoping, despairing, hoping,—life or death?

FOUNDLINGHOOD

O H, but a foundling child am I,
With foster-mother Earth;
Not knowing whence I came or why,
Or whom I owe my birth!

I long the mystic veil to lift,
To know my natal clime;
To know who set my life adrift
Upon this Nile of Time.

Earth found me in my little ark,
And gently hushed my cry;
All day she nursed me, and at dark
She crooned my lullaby.

But I outgrew her nursery,
Its joys and innocent trust,
And learned from sunset, sky, and sea,
I was no child of dust.

Oft quivering like a leaf-stripped bough,
I woke—the Vision gone;
A Hand at evening touched my brow
With world-oblivion.

A Face, when night was in its noon,
Looked down upon my tears,
As 'twixt two clouds the melting moon
Looks down—and disappears.

Oh, pondering what things have been,
I seem to glimpse a Goal!
The universe is but an inn
Unto my vagrant soul.—

I must be gone with staff and scrip
Wherever leads the way,
With dreams my only fellowship,—
My dreams by night and day.

INDWELLING

THE howlings of a freezing pariah dog,
Crouched mid the too scant straw that chance
had left

From the stuffed bed I lay on, came and reft
My sleep: and looking up I saw the fog
Of froze breath; and despite the smouldering log,
Reddening through with ripeness of old fire,
The casement rimily powdered: cold was dire,
And night without like loam at heart of bog.
Too importuned by the brute wail I rose,
And whistling the dead midnight half astir,
Enhoused the limp disturber of repose.
In the long after-hush, not to have known
God moaned and suffered in the unkennelled cur,
Had gorgonized the universe to stone.

AGNOSTIC

L IKE one who through long hours of darkness
strode,

And having reached a bolted portal turns
Perplexed and dazed, wondering why still burns
The white light not that cheered him on the road;
And to the window steals where once it glowed,
Or seemed to glow, and breathing on its ferns
Of frost peers eagerly within, nor learns
If Life be tenant of that murk abode;—
So after winding journeyings by night,
Darkling before the World I stand, with eyes
That gaze bewildered, since there shone a light
Somewhence around me and lit up the skies.
For Living Soul I strain with aching sight,
And utter darkness from within replies.

AS PHANTOM FROST

AS phantom frost that silvers bush and tree,
When sifted by the wind to nether snow,
Becomes a dance of crystal-slippered glee,
The evanescent ages come and go.
Their Time-glass—ceaseless and yet ne'er reversed,
Nor emptied here to be replenished there—
No reckoning doth keep
Of years, or any human last or first:
Our wake seems that of birds that wing the air,
And the one thing abiding—is it Sleep?

TUMBLEWEEDS

A FIELD I watch on autumnal days
The scurry of tumbleweeds;
Snapped from their hold of roots in the mould,
Wind-trundled, they scatter their seeds.
Textured to catch every breeze that strays,
They roll and roll in a hundred ways,
Wherever the mad wind speeds.

Afield I muse on our tumbleweed lives,
Caught up within fate's control;
Rootless they range through mazes of change,
Adown stubbled years, without goal.
Yet when the ultimate Stillness arrives,
Time may be sown with seed that survives,
Through the flights of fugitive Soul.

SEND ME ABROAD

SEND me abroad that I may love the earth;
Pour round me loneliness in desert space,
Lest the society I lose for aye
Of things I love and dwell with face to face.
We see not Beauty, seeing her alway;
And the stars' nightly birth
Is beautiful through intervening day:
Unseal mine eyes with dearth:
Send me abroad that I may love the earth!

Send me abroad, O God, even from Thee,
Could so the inner vision be made keen
To sense the Presence: for so frail is sight,
Being too much the All, Thou art unseen.
If that aloofness wherein broods the night
My element could be,
Perchance the heart might worship Thee aright,
And so remerge with Thee,
A spirit wave within a spirit sea.

WAS IT FOR THIS

WAS it for this,
We touched at shores of marvel, isled in dream,
Where things that are flower into things that seem,
To wake to brine and shoreless distances—
Was it for this?

Was it for this,
We dredged the turbid universe for truth,
To learn that inexperience and youth
But missed what being mortal is to miss—
Was it for this?

Was it for this,
We travelled the strange road that winds from birth
Up the sheer steep of years whose crown is Worth,
Beyond to brink a fathomless abyss—
Was it for this?

Was it for this,
We sought from goal to goal, to find that thus
Life hardened to a toil of Sisyphus,
A Tantalus thirst for fruit and waves of Dis—
Was it, was it for this?

HELP THOU MY UNBELIEF

THROUGH seeming farce and contradiction,
The very pressure and the shock,
Almost surmise becomes conviction,
Like clay compacted into rock,

That for some mighty End the spirit
Must wage the strife of right and wrong;
That in the noise, could we but hear it,
There is an undertone of Song.

And whatsoever Time reveal us,
This truth remaineth truth no less:
More consciousness alone can heal us
Of all the ills of consciousness.

Time's twilight is the dawn eternal,
And sorrows are unripened joys;
And Death is but the Love maternal
That from her darling takes the toys;

And from the clothes its limbs releases,
And wipes the foolish eyes that weep,
And tenderly its thirst appeases,
And croons the little one asleep.

IF GOD BE GOD

THOUGH vainly I should waft my prayers for light
Toward sable skies and leaden; though the mind
That sails the chartless mystery should find
No token of a haven, hid from sight;
Though life be wholly sealed and recondite,
My being with this faith is intertwined:
The Infinite Mother will not leave mankind,
Her babe, on Death's cold door-step in the night.
If God be God, what though the nightly glow
Of worlds but told of mighty sepulchres?
A blessing will burst forth on wings of snow
From every rifted chrysalis of curse;
And Spirit will outlive the stars that flow
Within the time-glass of the universe.

DARK IS THE PILOT-HOUSE

FERRIED across the bay at night,
I cannot see who stands
Before the wheel and guides aright
Our course 'twixt sundered strands,—
'Twixt traffickings of sister prow:
Dark is the pilot-house.

Our earth-ship which hath seas aboard,
And soul more vast than seas,
Think you it saileth space unshored,
Plunged forward rudderless?
When clashed night's million starry prow?—
Dark is the pilot-house.

TRUST

DEEM not the looms of dawn become worn
Weaving the roseate garments of Morn;
Dread not lest ever the punctual blue
Fail to send twilight the stars that are due;
Doubt not that still from the wind-shattered main
Will speed the white-panoplied legions of rain
Overland, far as the heavens are broad;
Nor fear that Time can undeify God!

PRAYER

NOT supplication but communion,
And love, the shrine;
Not telling beads, but childlike union
With the Divine.

'T is feeling what no words can capture,
Though music-shod;
It is the spirit's holy rapture
That God is God.

PRESCIENCE

DANK fields, no faintest glint of green hath broke
The drear of; skies' dull gray uninterspersed
With the white surprise from thunder-clouds aburst;
No hint of wimpling leafage on the oak:
And yet I see abroad the robin folk,
Tripping with pensive interludes of pause;
And yestereve I watched mid icy flaws
The northward wild geese like a film of smoke.
A little space, and all that now delays
Inert in wombs of loam will come to light:
Weed ardors, and the mighty lusts of bogs,—
Feigned stagnancy but mantling fecund ways;
Brief space, and lovers loitering of a night
Will hearken, suddenly aware: "The frogs!"

APRIL

WHAT time the prairie still lay bleak and frore,
I sauntered forth: like some old palimpsest
That waits new writing for the old suppressed,—
Such seemed the dreary fields I wandered o'er.
A worn age-yellowed parchment, little more!
Fragments of words whose thought could not be
guessed;
And not a single spear of grass to attest
That here would yet be lavished a new lore.
To-day upon the selfsame fields I stroll.
The selfsame? Nay; the mighty vellum hath been
Illuminated with its summer green.
As long as spring is spring and soul is soul,
I ask not why earth, sky, and all between,
Have not been tossed aside, a crumpled scroll.

AGAIN

A GAIN! . . .
The resurrected Thunder,—
God's whisper from the lips of vernal rain;
The passion and the wonder
Of earth's rekindled emerald fires;
Wild fowls' mercurial flight
In sinuous wedges cleaving day and night;
Arbutus, and the pallid flower whereunder
The bloodroot spires,
Wrapt in its solitary leaf;
Rathe catkins, downy as forgotten grief;
The prairies, windowed with a thousand pools;
Loam's multitudinous dark
Titanically pregnant with the Wheat;
Upquivering subtle heat,
And dew already when the evening cools;
Robin and meadow-lark,
Everywhere, everywhen,
Again!

I will go forth!
I will festoon my soul with all this joy!
Doff the man, put on the boy,
And make this conflagration of the nerves to cease.
I too will hie me north,
Putting the great sky spaces
Betwixt my yesterday and my to-day,—
At one for a sweet breathing-spell of peace.
Enough of this drear tutelage of books!
Now give me brooks,
Now give me May,
Wilding graces,
Laughter of winds, sun-mottled forest places,
Highways and byways, mead and morass,—
Lowly birth-house of the grass.
Too long, all too long,
I have been one of the pavement throng!
Custom-driven, the sumpter of pelf,
Pack-saddled with mode,
And stalled in the self,
When night released from the curb and the goad,—
All for a little keep,
Musty mouthfuls, and sleep,
That the morrow might find me again at the load.
Lord's or week-day,
I must away,

Somewhither, somehow,
Now! now! now!
Trees have sent for me: sap 's in the bud,
And there 's gallop still in my blood.
This hibernating
Is obsolete when the birds are mating.
A wild goose on high
Makes irrelevant everything but the sky.
The flower in the wild
Is there to resuscitate in me the child.
Therefore sweet rains are fashioning things
To out-Solomon kings,
Lest I linger here,
Afar from the revelling-house of the year.
Therefore the web-foot has entered in,
Therefore the wave is fain of each fin,
To rebuke my being abroad.
It 's the homing season: I want to go home
To the great savannas of mother loam,
To the billow, the star, the dew, and the sod! . . .
Again, again,
Everywhere, everywhen,
God!

I WATCHED A STORM

I WATCHED a storm, unkennelled from a cloud,
Startle a forest; and trees, high and low,
Leapt like a herd of antlered deer that know
Death is unleashed. A single Oak unbowed
Still bore his foliage heavenward; met uncowed
With shield of green the Tempest's thrust and blow;
Impassionately shocked they, foe with foe,
Yet towered that sylvan gladiator proud.
Fierce roots, that felt the throe and understood,
Encoiled bed-rock,—a new Laocoön group!
And the black whirlwind with a mighty swoop
Of dragon-wings departed from the wood;
And once more silence fell upon the lands:
I heard the big-limbed Hills, clapping their hands.

STORM IN THE ADVENT

STORM in the advent: the sky gradually
Empurpled into dusk autumnal grape;
With now and then a far-off liquid lightning
Jetted, as bruised an unseen Hand ripe fruit,
All meek to yield its pulp to watering lips.
Nearer and nearer, Thunder! Oh, the first
Wild spurt from the wine-press! Oh, the fierce white
rain,
Flasked, vaulted, by the glad old vintner, Earth!

BY THE PACIFIC

TEN thousand years the same old grist of sand,
The Sea hath ground; yet never came to him
Sense of defeat, or, numbing brain and limb,
Sense of futility. Wherever land
Launches forth shore out of itself to stand
A barrier to the sea, the upheaval grim
Of waters from unsounded depths and dim
Makes an eternal treadmill of the strand.—
The Soul, more elemental and more vast!
Yet shored about with shifting flesh that meets
And hurls it back on Self eternally:
But for such Faith as animates the Sea,
What record of its broken frustrate past?
The self-dictated epitaph of Keats.

I SAW A HOARY SURF-OUTJUTTING ROCK

I SAW a hoary surf-outjutting rock
Give back a tumbling breaker to the sea
In mimic waterfalls, that sang with glee,
As if they danced from watering a flock
Within a vale, or plunging made a mock
Of barriers; nay, more wild and silvery
Than brooks called forth out of the hills could be,
This reef that streamed beneath the tidal shock.
And I bethought me there beside the main:
What if I so could weave me singing robes
Out of the flux and fluency of things;
Out of a passion mightier than the globe's
Massed waters, and uphurled with mightier pain?
So must he shape his fate whoever sings!

IN EAR-SHOT OF THE SHORE'S
INGATHERING

I N ear-shot of the shore's ingathering
Of breakers from a thousand leagues of sea,
There comes a sense of Fate's austerity,
That softens not to any Orphean string.
Nor seems it of much moment if to sing
And soar aloft be mine perpetually,
As fain I would; or if at times it be
That I must trail instead a broken wing.
Here to dismiss identity a while
Seems not so difficult; nor, when dismissed,
With its child's babble betwixt tear and smile,
Could aught so fill with thought and render sane,
As that large utterance whereto I list,
The shore's perpetual Selah to the main.

GULLS

AFTER a week's infinitude of sea,
White gulls are dear, anticipant of shore,
The English chalk-cliffs, with perennial roar
Of breakers, and the world beyond of tree,
And winding hedgerow, hamlet spire, and lea;
They, harbingers of these, sweep on before,
And circle back, or caring not to soar,
Garland the haven's waters with their glee.
And I, who stood all eager to tread land,
Of that strange other Voyage muse whereto
This present seems but mimicry and play:
Shall we be ushered in by wings that day,
Meeting us out at sea, and will the Strand
Rise white and glittering thus from surfy blue?

MOODS

THE day begot moods in my summering heart,
And some caught the rapture of things,
Like impulsive beetles that hurtle and dart,
Achant with the fresh boon of wings.

And some, as the hours of the day winged on,
Hung white as its fleck of new moon;
And some were emotion shot over with sun
And opaline afternoon.

But rarest of moods that a day awakes
Is the mood of the Waning Light:
Forests that stand the dim sentries of lakes
Sentinel feeling to-night.

I WOULD I WERE A LITTLE WAVE

I WOULD I were a little wave,
Some brooklet's in the valley,
The lush and lusty grass to lave
And with the flowers to dally.

To madly waltz o'er deep and shoal
With endless song and laughter;
To feel the same wild thrill of soul
Before the ball and after.

To gladden as the morning sun
The darkest of abysses;
To put a diadem upon
The humblest weed its kisses.

To lead a life of frisk and whirl,
Like some unbridled filly;
To die by breaking into pearl
Against a water-lily.—

Ah, would I were a little wave,
Some brooklet's in the valley,
The lush and lusty grass to lave,
And with the flowers to dally!

PRAIRIES

N^O drear Cimmerian waste,
Birth-marked with bleakness in the womb of
things,—

Not such, ye Prairies, paced
Full oft with dreams and high imaginings.
The far horizon here uncoils dread rings,
Nor yet finds bound
More than above seas' measureless profound;
And utter stillness brims the hour,
Like that which brooded o'er primeval space,
Ere yet a world had orb'd into its place
Or morning stars had hymned Creative Power.
Mountains and forests hence have fled,
Like trivial things, and lodged instead
In lands that cannot dim
Their rugged majesty of form and limb
With too prodigious breasts, with too vast head.

Yet of thee, prostrate Titan woman, I
Am lover: thy weird laughter and strange tears,
And large, unearthly, superhuman sigh,
Move me and thrill with inarticulate fears,
And passion, thine eyes only can assuage.
Beholding thee, I viewed
Survivals of the earth's heroic age,
Incarnating her primal Dorian mood.

Green endlessness of visionary brow,
Once filleted with glacier from the North,
In ages of old elemental wars,
Nor less majestic now!
Theatre for the sun's white coming forth,
And ocean floor for night with scudding stars!
'T was not that I have seen thee oft as hewn
White marble 'neath the splendor of the moon;
Or witnessed that terrestrial eclipse,
Thy loam-expanse that darks
Fields yesterday so luminous with wheat;
Or invoked by glad meadow-larks
Through all the waiting spring, that thou wert sweet;
Or splashed with clouds through depths of summer
heat,
That thou wert as the sea with sudden ships,

And in thy night-wind's roar as leonine—
Not these my heart made integral with thine:
But more thy being to me
An invitation into mystery;
A furlough from the self, a dream's release
Through opened doors of revery into peace;
That here I felt resting upon me oft
Eyes of the Human, soft
And sad—O soft and sad ineffably!
That I could here rehearse
That loneliness which is the universe,
And that more utter loneliness, the soul:
Therefore thy touch ofttimes hath made me whole,
Sweet kingdom of the Whist,
And soothed into that Quiet which reveals.
How more than ever wine or eucharist,
Thy evening sky and ecstasy of mist
Authenticated Presence! How to dream
Attested, when as here the heart but feels,
Reality Supreme!
Beholding new-created Prairiehood,
God saw that it was good:
I too have heard
And seen the flesh-made Word,—
Pondered and read and somewhat understood.—

A dwindling petrel of this vastness, I,
Into its darkness winging, and alone
With the wind's night-long monotone
Of wailing and unfathomable sigh!
What sorrow is at heart of this weird cry?
Can it be, here, here too,
The Spirit hibernates in flesh,
As within me, fain to renew
Its youth, and quicken into life afresh?
Is it not Soul I list,—
That Soul whereof all being doth consist,
Here darkling making piteous moan o'er Change,
With its so poignant forfeitures, and strange
Loan of frail senses and a little breath,
Repaid with such grim usury in death?
O Angel of the Fan,
I feel, I feel, in this thy winnowing swirl,
How much of chaff the major part of man!
I feel in these fierce flaws
How we are carded by relentless laws
To make our fleecy contribution, each,
To the spindle that so tirelessly doth twirl,
And the shears that seem to teach
With severance the no-purpose of it all.—
If will were not a weed whose sap is milk.

And the heart within as silk;
If grasp were not all lag of reach;
If every day at end did not recall
Petty disloyalties that inked the soul;
If mind were not a barren womb that cries
Like Rachel for the mother agonies;
If through the murky drift
Glimmered one faintest Certainty of Goal—
Then Reason were less tragical a gift
In a universe of death. . . . I break my staff,
Thinking how vainly through the years I wooed
The beauteous Ideal, which unpursued,
Soul were as near to.—Introspective eyes
That make the hours of night Gethsemane,
Gaze no more lest I be
Sucked down the vortex of a demon laugh
O'er failure which yet purposed high emprise!—

Ascetic Prairies! ye so world-withdrawn,
And healing! I am back 'neath your still dawn,
That ushers in from half-erased night
The pathless and interminable plain.
Sobered, once more your sovereignty I own,
And reattune my strain
To that dumb resignation lying prone

About me in the quiet morning light.
All-pensive I behold
The lands ploughed black with upturned mould,
More sable for the gold
Which caravans of reapers in long file
Reaped endlessly, mile after golden mile.
Soon storm will come, the fierce iconoclast,
To shatter with wild blast
Your Indian summer, and blot out with rain
Sun and the sky, till shivering thought mourns
Beneath November, wan and gray as Norns.
Anon your acres bivouac under snows,
And yesterday's voluptuous swaying of grain
Will have become to-morrow's white repose.—
Unto a larger meter than man knows
The choric dance of Destiny is trod,—
The incalculable rhythm which is God!

INDIAN SUMMER

WHEN some fond mother thinks of her dead child,
Entrusted to the Virgin Mother's heart,
And glimpses, a brief moment eased of smart,
Its face as in a sea of wings enisled,—
At truce with tears, her eyes grow wondrous mild;
Soft radiance overflows each vigil trace;
With folded hands she dreams a little space,
As if to Fate her life were reconciled.
No other than such mother's respite here
In field and woodland, that, enhaloed so,
Lie rapt in the year's tender evening light;
Nor other than her doom,—the all too near
Awakening, and for surrendered glow,
Darkness, and the disintegrating night.

RETROSPECT

I N retrospect toward days that were all rest,
From days to be all labor, I would turn,
Lest in its dearth too much the spirit yearn,
And change too bitter prove, being unexpressed.
I who in surging crowds am loneliest,
Adread of noonday glare as shyest fern,
Therefore no less with ardent pulses burn,
And mourn the day that reddens down the West.

As one whom quiet worship hath ensouled,
Beneath the sanctity of temple towers,
Hears the recessional, and fain the hour's
Peace would prolong, ere the world bleak and cold—
Didst thou not feel, when Summer Days, white-stoled,
Had chanted their rich liturgy of flowers,
Too brief the perfect Service which was ours,
Sweet worshipper, whom the same spell did hold?

With legionry of leaves, the tree disbands,
Here every forest nook is being strewed;
Thou art with Beauty, every morn renewed,
And still beneath thine eye the sea expands.
There I remember how we crossed the lands
The upward winding road to solitude,
And climbed and climbed, till, when at gaze we stood,
God laid the whole sweet world between our hands.

A single bird, though mateless as I now,
Sang in the amphitheatre of hills
The risen morn's oblivion of ills,
And faith in things, no heart could disavow.
O softer than the hand upon a brow
Whose touch is Sabbath to the pulse it stills,
We felt the hour,—as if nor sundered wills,
Nor change had been or e'er could be, somehow!

My harp of life is many-stringed the more
For every hour upon the heights with thee;
For pensive afternoons beside the sea,
Where tides had sculptured stair and corridor
Out of the rocks, and hewn us caves whose floor
Strewed with his handiwork, Infinity:
Oh, thence must come my spirit minstrelsy,
Or I be dumb,—dumb as in days before!

Was it not sweet, disburdened of the Me,
To sit where the great wheeling sea-birds winged!
Was it not inspiration to feel ringed
About with the same sky immensity
Of mantling splendor! There we have breathed free!
There made the attuned universe a stringed
Instrument of our feeling,—queened and kinged
By the all-wonderfulness of the Sea!

Lest the mean things of life o'ergrow and smother
The finer nature, sometimes we must sing;
Sometimes a picture the relief will bring;
Sometimes a quiet moment with another,
Eyes gazing into eyes—friend, wife, or brother:
But always this makes life a sacred thing,
To feel the warm and tender cherishing,
Crooned o'er and rocked by Nature, the All-Mother.

We wist not whence the joy, but we were blessed;
We asked not how or why, but breath was good
Each morn anew. It seemed that what we would,
An Ariel wrought at Prospero's behest.
And Fate was right, Age, Death, somehow seemed best,
When, after our brimmed outdoor day, we stood,
Hand clasped in hand, in meditative mood
Before the sun declining in the West.

Three revolutions of the moon!—and how
The nine, not borrowing light from them, were drear,
Emptied of purpose, with insistent fear
O'erclouded, lest some ill betide!—but now
Even Fate should find me with enhaloed brow,
As hath this twilight found me, sitting here
In dreams alone,—yet not alone, since near,
The warm hovering Presence which is Thou!

AFTERGLOW

AND so the Bedouin Sun hath stolen away.
Among the clouds that stretch like desert sands
His camp-fire smolders, and before it stands
The lonely figure of abandoned Day.
A moment since, her hair, already gray,
Flowed sunset gold; the rose it wore, her hands
Convulsive crush and scatter on the brands,
Just dying in a final flickering ray.
Earth hears once more long-hushed Ænone's groans,
Upshivering through the gloom, for Paris fled;
The Wind remembers how he fanned with moans
Dead Dido's pyre, and soft the cold lips kissed. . . .
The nomad Moon hath struck her tent of mist,
Star caravans begin to move o'erhead.

FIRST SNOW

A GAIN the strange impromptu world of white:
A pallid Cloud hath given birth to snow,
And like a foundling it was left below
On Nature's door-step in the dead of night.
Lawns, avenues,—the town hath taken flight,
As if had spoken here and it was so
The Spirit which makes all things New: and oh,
What thoughts awoke within me at the sight!
For while I viewed the scene, upon me stole,
Like snow from out the skies of memory,
The sweet remembrance of a stainless soul;
And purity, suggesting Purity,
Made thought to soar beyond the furthest star
To the White Throne where God and Mother are.

A WEED

I CAME to view the sacred mound
Beneath which Mother slept;
No grass had healed the wounded ground,
No flowers above her wept:
But shedding dewdrops, bead on bead,
There stood a poor uncomely weed.

I scattered lilies till her tomb
With snowy beauty teemed;
But lovelier than any bloom,
And far more fragrant seemed
The weed that unsolicited
Stood shedding dewdrops o'er her bed.

TO F. B. H.

L IKE a white hand that shields a little light
For which a wind comes hungering through the
night,

Thou art unto the hope that burns within me;
I owe it thee if darkness shall not win me,
And overwhelm within my heart the fire
Of high desire.

If through the murk of time shall steal its rays
Of ecstasy and longing, thine the praise.
If to the full of some allotted splendor
It shine abroad till the fierce dark grow tender,
And unmooned night wax beautiful with flame,
Thine, thine the fame!

THY SOUL

WHAT shall I liken thy soul to,
Beautiful One whom I love?
Music the starry worlds roll to,
Nightly through azure above?

Flowers when newly in blossom,—
Wreath for the Summer, soft-browed?
Snow when still clasped to the bosom
Of some fond moon-wedded Cloud?

Not in sphere-music or garland
Or snow I hear thee and see:
Oh, what on earth or in star-land,
Love, shall I liken to thee!

LIKE BIRDS OF PASSAGE

WE are like birds of passage, Love, that stole
Adown some shining river to its mouth;
Winging, winging, toward what warm spirit South,
What spring-abandoned nesting haunts of soul?
Beneath our flight mystical waters roll
Singing, to tryst with what expectant bar?
Above, the ageless moon and stars; afar
Our still unglimpsed but dream-conjectured goal.
If we shall come at last into our own,
Effulgent with the morn of that new Prime,
Be but our advent wing to wing as now;
And with us, o'er the gulfs of darkness flown,
This memory: we met, and dear wert thou,
In leafless forests of the northern clime.

REVERY

IF, slumbering, I could bid with a breath
My Love appear,
As dreaming Autumn whispereth
Till silkweeds hear,

And glide and glimmer o'er the trance
Of dell and lake;
If I could bid—but no; perchance
I might awake!

TO-NIGHT

THE lonely tree-top tosses on high
A star from the azure to sweep;
The pearl-fisher dives for treasures that lie
In the heart of the mystic deep:
And something is plucking my garment's hem,
And something is luring to flight.
O Love, more precious than star or gem,
Your Lover is coming to-night!

For one shy wavelet's foamy embrace
The sea-bird all others doth spurn;
For one little woman's beautiful face
Regardless of others I yearn:
And that one bird-kissed wave of the sea
Will ripple and gleam with delight;
But yours, my Love, will be ecstasy:
Your Lover is coming to-night.

The winds are carding the clouds of snow,
And spinning the silvery showers;
And earth is busily weaving below
The grass and the many-hued flowers:
And into the warp and woof of my life
Shall I weave your spirit of white.
O soul of my soul, my darling and wife,
Your Lover is coming to-night!

THOU

IF all the rapture of outlingered winter
Could find a lovelier utterance than spring;
If pearly rifts of azure that but hint her
Were not the moon's divinest compassing—
Then, dearest heart,
I might have wished thee other than thou art;
Then to me now
Thou couldst be more melodiously Thou.

If evening were not beautiful when feeling
The glimmer of a firstling star begun;
If stillness were not mild, and beauty, healing,
As to a flower, the mantle of the sun—
Then, dearest heart,
I might have wished thee other than thou art;
Then to me now
Thou couldst be more melodiously Thou.

If the soul resting under weeping willows
Of banishment pined not for the return;
If absent, tossed and lost on alien billows,
The mariner for haven did not yearn—
Then, dearest heart,
I might have wished thee other than thou art;
Then to me now
Thou couldst be more melodiously Thou.

LOVE IN THE SEA

OUT of the waters that smothered fleets,
And took the winds with a roar,
Welters the tortuous surf till it meets
With the gleaming sickle of shore.
Wading into the deep,
We front the turmoil and din:
O glee of clasped hands and the leap
Where the breakers come in!

High overhead a wild fowl or two,
Winging still wet from the sea;
Out of the blue and into the blue
To the tidal rhythms, we.
Dash they in foamier race,
Or strain more wildly to win,
I 'm roots to this lily-frail grace,
Where the breakers come in.

Beautiful one of the sea-drenched hair,
Whose girlish laughter outbraves
The fierce white spray that frenzies the air,
And the smiting splendor of waves,—
I'd stay her so in a strife
Where mightier wrecks have been,—
On the shore, surf-tormented, of Life,
Where the breakers come in!

UNPREMEDITATED ART

DANTE in absence of his Beatrice,
In revery immersed, some hour of dew,
Unconsciously an angel's likeness drew
Upon the canvas scroll,—not meant for this,
Perchance, but murk imagining of Dis,
Some record of the sighs of Charon's crew:
But Love to that sweet converse urged anew
With her, the dawn-white citizen of Bliss.
And often, very often, at the feast
Of quiet, day succeeding, when some theme
Of awe I meant should hold thrilled thought in fee,
Thy spirit wings o'ercanopied my dream:
The soul's rose window shotten through with East,
I sang of thee, Loved One, I sang of thee.

SONG

LET lightnings lasso the forest,
And moonbeams enmesh the sea:
But I would capture a wild, wild heart,
Forever in flight from me.

There are toils for the filmiest wonders,
For dew-sheen and firefly gleams:
But where's the snare for an outlaw grace,
And charms too panic for dreams?

Oh, midnight's the hush of surrender
Of infinite blue to the stars:
For feet that have sped, feet with thistle-down tread,
I could pluck down horizons like bars!

Oh, the tempest's a Bedouin courser,
That paws a village like dust:
But here 'twere vain, though I flung him the rein,
And the spur to his flank should thrust!

Oh, the pulse of Time is madness,
And the breath of Change is fire:
Yet frenzy and flame, how more easy to tame
Than a fresh young life's desire!

Ah, lightnings lasso the forest,
And moonbeams enmesh the sea:
But I would capture a wild, wild heart,
Forever in flight from me!

SONG

DEAR one, near one,
I have called to Dream
To flow around thee singing,
As round an isle, a stream.

Fair one, rare one,
Thou art unto me
Like water's intermittent blue,
When breezes crisp the sea.

Lonely one, only one,
Could I hear thy voice,
Though stars from heaven withered,
I should still rejoice.

IN ABSENTIA

AND what, I asked, of resultant boon,
From the summer-tide that hath flown apace,
Will be to my coming life as a moon
The dawn is impotent to efface?

'T will not be the minstrelsy of birds,
The liquid parabola of song
Of the meadow-lark; nor the lowing of herds,
When the pastoral sunset lingered long;

Nor that I stood where mountains await
In a bridal softness of silver gray
The sun's white forthcoming in royal state,
And a shiver of ecstasy meets the day;

Nor the unsundered midsummer snow,
Climbed to through sighing of pines and trod;
Nor all that laughter of landscape below;
Nor the sea, the swaying bluebell of God.

Not these, not these! but that I could be
Still in thy heart, Beloved One, supreme:
This was the soul of summer to me;
This, its boon I rehearse in my dream!

ANY HUSBAND TO ANY WIFE

O H, ranging up and down the years, all evident
becomes

The very best thing God provides is being wedded
chums!

Win whosoever will their wage for living from the
mart,

In emoluments of place, in ecstasies of art:

But it's loved, wife, it's loved, it's loved I want to be!

We have n't gold, we have n't fame—what odds to
you and me!

For the things that have wings live not all in bush and
tree:

Some nest and trill in hearts of such as we.

Undone in Good endeavored by a Better unattained,
Unravelling but to find within that more of snarl
remained,

All effort comes to naught, as when the waking babe
at dawn

Interpolates a little sleep for every drowsy yawn.

But it 's loved, wife, it 's loved, it 's loved I want to be!
We have n't bodied forth our dreams—what odds to
you and me!

For the things that have wings live not all in bush
and tree:

Some nest and trill in hearts of such as we.

Some men are born to hard lots, with brows all afrown,
And some take Time as gently as the air a thistle-down;
And these are very sure a grave's the womb for some
new Birth,

And those, as sure the hither side is all there is to
earth.

But it 's loved, wife, it 's loved, it 's loved I want to
be!

We have n't fathomed Fate nor shall—what odds to
you and me!

For the things that have wings live not all in bush and
tree:

Some nest and trill in hearts of such as we.

SHE FLOODS WITH GOLD MY EVENING MOOD

SHE floods with gold my evening mood,
And twinkles in my twilight dream;
About me floats her virginhood
Like silvery mists above a stream.

The clouds divorce not moon and sea,
Nor space, the needle and its pole:
And exiled from her though I be,
Love finds its way 'twixt soul and soul.

ARTICULATE

WE walked as lovers: and affection's power
Too great for speech, she handed me a flower.

.

Before my sweet dead Love was borne away,
Voiceless, I handed her a bloom to-day.

'TWIXT SUN-DECLINE AND STAR-ASCENT

TWIXT sun-decline and star-ascent,
The gamut of the afterglow!

Oh, long the day, already spent,
Doth linger ere it go!

If Beauty had been thus prolonged,
Whereof I dream in revery,
Less widowed were the heart and wronged,
That it hath ceased to be.

If Love could take the changing hues
Of sunset, in its downward flight,
There were not shed such bitter dews
In darkness now, and night.

'Twixt sun-decline and star-ascent,
The gamut of the afterglow!
O Beauty, Love,—already spent,
Had ye but lingered so!

TO THE LITTLE ONE

THERE 'S a theme left unsung,
Though the lyre has been strung
For its music full oft in days gone;
'T is thy life's faery dole,
'T is thy white-tenting soul,
Should have touched me to song, little one.

Were I throated as spring's
Gladdest warbler that sings
All the rapture of summer begun,
I had long been thy lyrist
In tones thou nor hearest
Nor ever shalt hear, little one.

Dost thou know that to me
Thou art dew-ecstasy,
Caught in meshes, of gossamer spun?
That less radiant and pure
Is a star's vestiture
In the hyaline blue, little one?

I would fain have thee say
Why thou sailest this way,
Elfin pinnacle, where skies are so dun;
Where the breakers are sateless,
And wrecks lie in dateless
Oblivion below, little one.

If the waves could imprint
Lasting pearl where they glint
On the shingle all gold in the sun,
I 'd implore them with tears
To bejewel thy years
With their scintillant bliss, little one.

The culled pebbles of speech
That I fling from the beach,
A few moments ere tides overrun,
All precipitate sink
And a few bubbles wink
Filmy lids where they plunge, little one.

But were language a crown
Of most soft thistle-down,
And my fancy a goldfinch thereon,
It would set words afloat
That might waft to remote
Other ages thy name, little one.

THE POET

AY, he 's the unhoused Man; he sleeps afield,
Mingling his human breathings with the sighs
Of winds and grass-laired creatures, lover-wise,
What time the nightly splendors burn revealed;
The elemental Man who needs no shield,
But couches 'neath the everlasting skies;
And wheresoe'er on Nature's breast he lies,
The spousals of the universe are sealed.
A Spirit like the untabernacled moon,
Co-dwelling with the starry host that forms
The immemorial tenantry of space;
One with the summer Sea in midnight swoon,
Who, victor o'er the ages' legioned storms,
Lies pillowed on some isle with upturned face.

NOT THAT ABOVE HIS GRAVE THE WORLD
MAY HEED

NOT that above his grave the world may heed
What dust is mingled with insensate things,
And lingering ask, "Was he a poet—indeed?"
The singer sings.

His mystery of spirit, who can know?
The soul is like a cave upon the strand
Where the great sea records its ebb and flow
On a little sand.

Because a mist hung o'er the mountainside,
Making the earth and sky a moment kin,
His spirit took unto itself the Bride,
And entered in.

The sacrament of things he birthed in words,
Glimpsing a bird that taught its young to fly;
Or drinking rest from ruminating herds
With thirsty eye.—

There is no other dower of Time than sleep;
What Is was never winnowed of What Seems:
And yet his slumber being the less deep,
The dreamer dreams

CHATTERTON

A DRAMATIC POEM

“Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him.”—SHELLEY.

A LONE!
World-banished to this garret. London sleeps
Her myriad-lidded multitudinous sleep,
A monster Argus. Midnight, Hermes-like,
With fluting charm, has brought the eyeless moment:
I 'm Io who escape. . . . From what? I 'll sit
On the dizzy verge a moment and survey
My inky years below—less than a score;
Puny, yet sharp of tooth as any stream
Of three-score-ten to saw so sheer a plunge
Out of the hills. What chaos of wild rock
For full moon to make ghastly with! What caves
For Echo, shuddering back, afraid of darkness!
Of darkness? Me hath terrorized the light,
Arrowing, piercing, starless, moonless light,

And the sun's fierce autocracy of power.
Majestic! yet how pitiless compared
With Night, the all-forgiving, all-maternal,
Who visits even the dead, and so blots out
Corruption! . . . My congenial element
Were oozy blackness wherein lie sunk ships—
I, too, a wreck! And why should I not share
That couch of peace, that no-to-morrow? Grant
By buffeting the waves I still could reach
Haven, what then? What's human fame? A sky
Lightning hath gashed, yet instantly it heals.
And what's the vaunted privilege of breath?
The tilth of fields repeated a score times
Or two, and drudging for precarious fruit;
A little potter's cunning to shape clay,
Or poet's cunning to shape stubborn words,
For niggard wage. For wage? Hath poet wage?
Stand we not idle in the market-place
All day, for none hath hired us, Lord, forsooth?
I'll barter away death on no such terms;
I'm stayed for with the dead!

*[He reaches for the poison, when his eyes fall on the
manuscripts lying on the table before him.]*

Ha, telltale songs,
That eavesdrop the heart's wild soliloquies

'Gainst tyrannous Fate, lest your spy's tongue should
babble

I 'll pluck it out! I 'll rend you limb from limb,
Lest ye unlock my citadel of death

To peeping after-times. . . . Yet here 's an ode
That beats with borrowed pulses—wriggling bait

To catch the gudgeon, fame! Into the sea!

I 'm done with angling! . . . Ah, that lyric strain!

A little private ecstasy, a dew

That fell too noiseless for the night to hear—

Would it might share my cup and sleep! Ah me,

I strew the floor with all my singer's past,

Flake it with these white songs that so my tread,

Departing, be more muffled!—Pray, why muffled?

Why should I slip forth mutely out of life,

With a robber's wool-shod exit? It were right

I shook the accursèd dust from off my shoes

On city which hath spurned me forth; hurled back

From this safe height my hate, my agony,

My laughter of despair, and my death's triumph!

And yet what boots to thunder at the gates

Of ears that hear not, eyes that see not? Should

One dead arise, they 'd yawn—and resume sleep. . . .

If with a swan-song I could pave the way

For delicate feet of poets, yet to be,

Who so might travel home to the world's heart,

To the world's love, if but a little less
Bleeding, I'd make even this fatal moment
Melodious with singing. . . . Ha, what 's this!
A song I meant should elbow aside guards,
And standing in some royal audience hall
Plead me our cause.—No, no, it would not do!
There 's too much wild Cassandra in the strain
For doomed incredulous Troy. I should have mixed
More Sappho with my singing: her despair,
Fiery with love, left a perpetual trail
Where meteor-like she plunged into the sea,
Ages ago. . . . How vast that bridged abyss!
How wondrous the longevity of Song!
Her song!—but what of mine? Am I indeed
Her late-born brother? Who believes in me?
Believe I in myself? That doubt alone
Makes me in love with death! Too late-born,
we;

For earlier singers of the world's rich prime
Exhausted immortality for song.
To us, the starveling moment! Better tear
To shreds, and so anticipate oblivion.
A sorry business!—but I 'll medicine
Myself with the same desperate remedy
Soon!—Ah, poor panic things, each one of you
The petalled incarnation of a mood—

This dewy one, and this, and—no, not yet
I 'll crimson my Medea hand with this!

[After a pause, he reads the poem aloud.]

*Break, break, my suitor's rod, for I have sued
Vainly, all vainly for her lips and hand;
Fulfilment blooms upon another's wand:
My staff flung down becomes a serpent brood.*

*"Come down to the well, my soul's Rebecca, come,
The pitcher poised upon thine Orient head,"
I sang—and hearkened for the answering tread:
The stillness of the noonday air was dumb.*

*One whispered word to meet the soul's desire
Had flashed like sudden lamps through vistaed night;
Had oped blind eyes to the Mount's hidden might,
Soldiered and charioted around with fire.—*

*Break, break, my suitor's rod,—and break, my heart!
For not to you the ecstasy and bloom,
But dearth instead, and endlessness of gloom,
Whereunto fain forthwith I would depart.*

[*A long pause, during which CHATTERTON remains sunk in thought. He then takes the paper, and, while slowly tearing it, speaks as follows:*

How the little shell reiterates the sea!
One passion! Only shattered into bits
Will it unlearn the iris-throated murmur.
So be it! . . . I am quit, then, of the past.
And quit of Song? Almost the barbèd thought
Would grapple me to life,—to hunger, thirst,
Rags, and this garret—ay, yet worse than these,
To what men make of Man.—Impossible!
Their gadfly gossip shall pursue no more,
And lay its eggs; nor will I be a wave
Of this wild factional welter, nor consent
To the stop-gap existence of the crowd.
They deemed me liar, those men of little wit
And much misjudgment,—a ventriloquist
Of poesy, because I dared to speak
In borrowed accents, and forged Esau's touch
To filch the imperilled birthright—poets' wont
The wide world over! Pure unleavened speech
Is bread for no man's ear these latter days.
Indifference slays poets. I'd be heard! . . .
Could I have steeped the spirit in sheer beauty,
All fame had seemed redundant. I had asked

No more than soaring larks or woodland nooks
For eyes to grow self-conscious by. Too late
I see it!

[*After a pause.*

Life with world-averted eyes—
Were 't possible, I'd make me of this night
A turn in the road, and not a precipice. . . .
We're yoke-mates with the world, would we or no!
None wholly liveth unto Song! At best
The beautiful is windowed us through chinks
In a prison-house. What soul is out-of-doors!
We're made like unto galley-slaves who sit
Borne down with drowse from oaring a brute bulk,
While all transfixed with splendor the tranced sea
Receives in his nether course the lordly Sun.

[*After an interval of revery, CHATTERTON goes to the window, opens it, and stands meditatively looking out. Thereupon he speaks in a subdued voice.*

O the ecstasy of stillness which is night!
How the world grows confederate through sleep
And death, sweet dual agency of peace!

The furlough, sleep—how all too brief! and death,
The mustering out of service which returns us
Home! . . . I have kept one loyalty intact,
Recreant to whatever other cause,
Have fought and bled, ay, perish for it: Song!
Some rare enchanted potion of culled herbs,
Drunk with the mother's milk, made me her lover
Eternally. I strove to conserve pure
Knighthood of soul for her, nor quailed at heart
In a land sown with dragon seed.—Oh, not
To the all-sweet religion of her eyes
Am I apostate! but as one who dwells
With aliens, yet performs the gaped-at rites
Of his native worship, I have kept the Faith.
I have tasted, too, its bliss, as now its doom,—
Have tasted and found good: that men ignored,
Or made of me their sport,—like folk at sea,
Who watch from the idle deck some porpoise leap
Out of the infinite in which it swims—
What mattered, so I somehow broke through life's
Glassy monotony of days, and showed
What underlying depth existence hath!
What mattered whence the impulse came to song,—
A woman's hand, softly caressing back
In place her tress of hair that streamed in the wind,
Or darkling wonder of yon world of suns—

When every least, most trivial thing to me
Was symbol of divinity and life!
Then dreamed I, nor awoke to scorn as dream,
That songs like souls are preexistent things,
Which, summoned from their inmost heaven of
 heavens,
Submit to birth. No more than night the stars,
Doth poet create Song. Each frailest lyric
Comes into being singing God's "I Am!"

[The poet is silent for a few moments with intense feeling. Then as if seized with sudden frenzy he exclaims:

What hours were those, so drenched in ecstasy,
I feel their glistening after-showers even yet
Fall quickening! . . . What if now I should essay
Song! and again taste rapture of the poet's
Audacities of flight!—Ay, ay, she's forth,
My queen bee: soar, and die the nuptial death!

[He seats himself at the table, and composes as if in a trance, writing at intervals rapidly. After some time, he hurriedly gathers together his papers, and reads aloud the following lines:

*Ere the last breath suspire,
Thee, kindler of all fire,
Thee, darter of all splendor which hath been
And is; thee, soul of loveliness in flowers,
Moon's passion, and the white oncoming showers,
Exultant rainbows, dew and morning sheen;
Thee, subtiler than wine,
And vaster than the world-enclasping sea;
Thee, more than all in earth or heaven divine:—
Let me, Song, while there 's breath to sing, sing thee!*

*I hailed the clouds that rose
To tread unfooted snows
Of mountains, and more distant azure fields;
Who glide in tranquil queenliness through space,
Or run again Atalanta's virgin race,
Or smother the fierce sun 'neath flashing shields:
"Ye radiant ones who roam
The infinite, nor otherwhere are free,
O goddesses, white-limbed and born of foam,
There 's a yet swifter, statelier One than ye!"*

*I travelled thee as a bird
Travelleth air, and heard
Unspeakable things that tongue cannot recall.*

*When East and West were not, nor any bourne,
I groped for thee as darkness gropes for morn,
And stayed where but the shadow of thee might fall.*

*If banished from thy sight,
The soul were as an outcast without kin.—
O thou the utter depth, the utter height !
And thou the bride, and bridegroom entering in !*

*Not if all choirs were merged,
Not if all lips were purged
With fire from the altar, might their breath praise thee.
Words graze upon a thousand hills of speech,
And yet to thee who dwellest beyond reach
Of sacrifice what hecatombs can be !*

*What voice of smitten string,
Or festal ode that ever crowned the strong,
Or pæan unto thee were offering:
They are but songs, and thou alone art Song!*

*[He crumples the papers, and, quickly seizing the
cup of poison, goes to the open window. After
a few moments of silence, he speaks as follows:*

*The first faint gray in the East! Oh, beautiful
To be the waning morning star of dawn!
The night outlingered, yet not forced to wade*

The gulfs of noon! . . . Oh, soft and beautiful,
My golden vesper on the hither side!

*[He drains the cup, with a rapt
expression on his face.]*

KEATS

WHAT time a nether cloud in radiance stoled
Took on effulgence of a finer weave,—
As must who elevates the Host receive
Most special robe—the while faint vespers tolled,
Amber crescendo deepening into gold,
Earth knelt beneath the solar eucharist;
Then mystic shadows, visionary mist,
And saintliness of Sunset, growing old:—
That hour I thought of Keats, high celebrant
Of Beauty beneath vaulted Song sublime,
Gone down into the gloom; and questioned why
Nature, lavish of manna thus, should scant
Such lips the food they craved. . . . How gladly I
Would have shared with him my sparse crust of Time!

DECAMERON

I N that gay garden of Boccaccio's youth,
Bandyng tales and playing at king and queen,
Each for a day, so to beguile with sheen
Of surface mirth and laughter the grim truth
Of possible engulfing fate, and ruth
For those engulfed;—in that rare Tuscan scene,—
From whence even teeming Chaucer deigned to glean
Suggestion for the Pilgrim Tales,—in sooth,
Methinks we poets are pictured, we who sit
Withdrawn within our garden nook as they,
To feast on dreams and breathe Lethean air;
Choosing us king or queen—but for a day;
Bandyng tales and interchanging wit,
Against the background of the world's despair.

SYMBOLISM

IT is not Song's acropolis of dream,
With all its wealth of mould and carven frieze,
And column-shouldering caryatides,
And lordly pillars of the Parian gleam;
Nor temples with their statued gods supreme,
And goddesses, limbed whiter than the sea's
Projected foam; and wild-winged Victories;
And heroes, ancient bards' undying theme—
It is not these lend Poesy the spell
That thralls earth's generations: it were long
With many a beauteous thing beneath the sod
Crumbled and sunk,—Art's very citadel,
Unless in Song, of all the world in Song,
We built an altar to the Unknown God.

HOMER

O F that brimmed cup whence Hellas drank ere she
Her destiny's rich promise might fulfil,
Day by day I have sipped: and hours, else chill
And lone, have been society and glee.
Nor knew I till these hours of poesy,
Time pours me thus with hands that never spill,
What sweet allegro mood old tomes distil,
In unprecocious wines what virtues be.—
Homer, neglecting thee, ourselves we wrong,
Or scanning with too fierce dissecting gaze,
Thy mighty Then so thinking to make Now!
Midmost thy wondrous temple of rich Song,
I stood in ever deepening amaze:—
Civilization's first Apostle, Thou!

XENOPHON

“ Δοκεῖ μοι κατακαῦσαι τὰς ἀμάξας, ἵνα μὴ τὰ ζεύγη ἡμῶν στρατηγῇ. ”
Anabasis.

SPLENDOR-LURED by a kingdom to a grave,
The dreamer of imperial dreams was dead;
And who the myriad host some days had led,
Sham truce had trapped,—for open war too brave.
Then, after midnight council, whence as knave
They had scourged forth one hinting as less dread
Surrender than wild parasangs ahead,
Thus spake the leader, improvised to save:
“ Burn we our wagons that our cattle be
Not our commanders!”—Timely words and sage
For crisis then,—and now! This latter Age
As perilously circumstanced! Lest we
Our course shall take as chattel-captained men,
Would that some Voice admonished so again!

AFTER READING ÆSCHYLUS

WHAT syllable by syllable Life saith,
Fingering blind the tablets of the world;
Our tale of human years, like shadows furled,
When night comes on and no moon summoneth;
The mystery that by a little breath,
When Soul remounts her chariot of flesh,
Sleep-pastured senses should be yoked afresh;
The soothing wonder of all-shared-in Death;
And singers' yearnings, dreamers' ecstasies,
Which are the choral odes forevermore
'Twixt tragic human episodes of fate
Chanted and danced:—by meditating these,
I glossed the word that spake a seer of yore:
“The things that must be are so strangely great.”

CASELLA

"Amor che nella mente mi ragiona."

DANTE.

"O LOVE that with my soul doth converse hold"—
Casella caroled bird-like: and the throng
Of spirits, clustered round him, drank the song
The Florentine had penned in days of old,—
Himself among them, the most dreamy-souled:
Until of a sudden, Cato's brawl: "What wrong,
Ye spirit laggards, loitering thus long,
When to ascend behooved your feet were bold!"
Then what wild swirl of spirits!—Poet, great
And subtle at rebuke of Blindness!—still
Made guardian of the spiritual gate;
That knows not they who slake in Beauty's fount
Their thirst, already cleansed in thought and will,
Outsoar the looming Purgatorial Mount.

ON THE PRAIRIES

HERE have I walked, companioned with the great:
Here wandered from the mammonizing town
Into the vast serene, have sat me down
Amid the fumes which boundeth place nor date.
Here him of Avon in the sunset gate
I saw, and bowed the head; and him with mind
Apocalyptic, blindness could not blind;
And him, the Tuscan, sheer from depths of fate.
Regathered from innumerable death,
Impetuous souls I meditated here,
Whose tameless quest fulfilment came not nigh:
Keats; and who yielded Spezia his breath;
And Marlowe, like the wild-eyed charioteer,
Phaëthon, headlong ruining down the sky.

LUCIFER

DAILY I see pass by on tireless feet
The punctual lighter of lamps: unerring he,
As fine bloom-culling instinct in a bee,
To find his goal, hurrying from street to street;
Nor recks he that the lagging sun's retreat
Westward still hints not the great final red;
Nor heeds how pale what present light is shed,
But torch in hand kindles his round complete.
When spectral day doth yield to utter night,
Each seed of fire, each palpitant graft of flame,
Grows, towers, and silvers to a beacon light:
Whether Life wester soon or tarry long,
Down the wide avenues of spirit fame
Trim thou the wicks and light the lamps of Song.

IN LALEHAM CHURCHYARD

WITHIN a hamlet, far from din and strife,
An ivied church tower, clustered round with
 graves,

Stands warded by old yews of sable green,
And dim-hung cypresses. A river laves
Hard by a lone and meadowy serene,—
Ere the tumultuous life
Of cities, finding there its truce of God.
Betimes kine lowing to a distant ridge
Of sunset hills, or suddenly crossed bridge
Thundering, but deepen peace, there shed abroad.

So isled in pastoral hush I found his grave
Whose lifelong hunger was for peace alone;
And there rehearsed, attuned to quietude,
His going thither, now some decades flown,
To heal with sleep the fever of his mood
Beside the placid wave.

To such as he is hard the doom of breath,
And birth is the soul's falling among thieves:
It lies where pass the Levite morns and eves,
Till clasped at length by mild Samaritan death.

Strange that of one frail moment should be wrought
The isthmus between life and after-life;
That pinings for the things beyond recall,
And for the things yet unattained, the strife,
One moment thus should medicine, and all
Their bane should bring to naught!
The doubts which vexed and harassed long; the lees
Of sorrow, erewhile bitter to his lips,
He recks no more of now than sunken ships,
The thousand leagues of fog and laboring seas.

Forgive, great soul, that mournfully I flute
Thy memory back: such notes befit not thee,
Nor the glad season: thou as well as June
Art far removed from wintry tyranny,
And drinkest in full draughts thy summer's boon.
'T were better to be mute
Than mix a doleful note from faint-blown reed
With vernal raptures, whether spirit shore's,
Or that circuitous silver the Thames pours
Where sings the young lark now o'er Runnymede.

How thou were fain to range thine England now,—
Abdicate death a while and enter flesh
To feel the old-time thrill of earthly spring!
The immemorial miracle is fresh
As when Burns drank its sweetness, lingering
Oblivious of plough;
Or when in yesteryears the eyes grew hazy
Of Wordsworth, hearing the first cuckoo call;
Or Chaucer, else to books the willing thrall,
Blithe Chaucer lost his heart to the first daisy.

Oh, still the myriad bird-nativity,
And myriad singing! Morn a savor hath
Which makes mere breath voluptuously sweet;
And eve, the richness in secluded path
Of golden glowworms rising from ripe wheat.
I muse what now must be
Thy many-gardened Oxford,—she who bore
Thy soul at its white early christening
Of beauty; what is she, this hour of spring!
Alas, that she beholds thy face no more!

I sometimes dream more wondrous charm were June's,
If mournful things, betokening life's flight,
Could be upgathered and borne hence a while,
Or stored elsewhere a season,—as from sight

Is borne dry dew, or a flower's perished smile,
Or wan eclipse of moons.

Yet even in the midst of Dream's demands
Upsurges from the heart's most nether deep:
Surely the sleep cannot be ill they sleep,—
Homer, and all hushed singers of all lands.

I look abroad: a filmy summer cloud
Hath all the boundless heavens for its own,
Like a sail's mid-sea privacy: even so
Thou too didst live and dream and sing alone,
Enskied above the temporal ebb and flow,
The noise and herding crowd.
Thou seeker of enthusiasms fine,
Thou connoisseur of values rare: we touch
In thee something of rapt à Kempis; much
Of meditative younger Antonine.

Yet even as that cloud of mid-sky flight,
If chance it glimpse within some forest glade
A pool, aspiring to be mist, it too,
Yet thwarted by the jealousy of shade,
Might feel a sudden wistfulness undo
The bliss of that lone height,—
So thou;—and yet of pain the merest husk
Is pity: a world-tragic note attunes

Thy strain: it seems like some lake-haunting loon's
Wild cry of utter loneliness at dusk.

A momentary cry!—and then we stand
In the moonlight of thy spirit's revery,
From clouds of night emerging: through the hush
A nightingale sings darkling; the white sea
Of lunar waves floods dell and tree and bush,
As tide, the shingly strand.
We see a thousand years as day in span,
And then a day as thousand years; nor deem
Of life with less high faculty of dream—
Of fate and baffling mystery of man.

Then know we outward things, their form and face,
Are but reflected landscape in a wave:
The soul is forest, hill, o'erarching blue.
The world—like that sweet river near thy grave,
That wends a devious course the more to view
England, and makes a place
Of sojourn in its cool transparency
For English loveliness—postpones its goal;
Takes visionary tribute of the soul,
And mates with spirit ere it merge with sea.—

Thou numberest with that sparse minority
Whose song is like a lone majestic bird's
Motionless liquid cleaving of high spaces;
The master song of sage and brooding words,
Fulfilled of soul from dim old forest places,
Or after-sunset sea.

The pathos in all transitory things
Almost thou sawest betimes as Shakespeare saw;
Nor lack'dst of what in Dante so doth awe:
The imperial unsunder of great wings.—

God meant the poet's Eden should be Song;
Placed him therein to cultivate and tend
The vines, and bade him eat of every fruit
Brought forth, and live at peace unto the end.
But fate, whereof no sin was at the root,
Drave him without ere long
To labor mid the prickly growths of treason,
Rank weeds of passion, worldliness, despair.
Alas, alas, for what began so fair!—
Soon, all too soon, ended thy singing season!

Softly the reflux years repeat themselves
In memory: the long and patient road,
Bereft of singer's leisure, thy feet came.
Necessity, the overseer's goad,

Thee too drave forth in thy clear morn of fame,
As him who dykes and delves;
Thee too, for guerdon of a little bread
And drink, made burn the brick with toil-won straw:
Chatterton the impending loss foresaw
Of singer's birthright, and chose death instead.

All honor, praise, to thee who in an age
When soul grew numb and lethargy was law,
Despite the outward turbulence, thyself
From the arid world of deed didst not withdraw;
Nor scorn to share—though scornful of the pelf
Of mercenary wage—
The embattled vanguard's privilege of scars:
O luminous exemplar that thou art,
Almost repents of cavilling strain, the heart!
Night takes away a world, but gives the stars.—

Beautiful on the mountains are thy feet!
Beautiful, steeped in soul like thine, the earth,
And thrilled to more than sun's creative smile!
Time's beaver-tooth makes mockery of girth;
Some moment will unpyramid the Nile,
And blow the hills to sleet.

Yet souls there be the dim disastrous years
Can move not: earth is glad to know they are,
As earth is glad at noon of moon and star,
Invisible, but unquenched as vesper nears.

IN MEMORIAM

HENRY MARTYN SIMMONS

THERE be whose reason's flight no more impede
The barriers of sense than leaves, a bird,
That plunges nestward with unbated speed,
Arrow-straight, recking not of branchlet stirred;
Or they, to whose yet rarer sight each flower
Windows the Vital Soul within the sod;
To whom a bluebell glimpsed in windy hour,
Athrill, is but the hither side of God.

Not he of these: too vast the awful sum
Of mystery wherewith his vision strove,
In that perspective wherein faiths become
As various as the greens of vernal grove.
What wombed in the eternities may be
To him was theme too dread for vain surmise:
Something of fine old Attic sanity
And poise in him surveyed the New-World skies.

GAZING ACROSS THE STORIED MARTIAN
FIELD

GAZING across the storied Martian Field,
I think how Power by slow degrees upclomb
To world-dominion: there deliberate Rome
Once schooled her youth to legions, glaive and shield
Enkindling to the sun, while trumpets pealed;
There seaward still the Tiber's waters foam,
And yet beyond, unneighbored Peter's dome,
Anchored in ebbing sunset, stands revealed.
Beneath the spell of overmastering dream,
I see, not individual empire hurled
To dust, but Change in all her mazy round
And mad mutation, very Change supreme:
Yet all the while that wonder of the world,
As looming Charlemagne were being recrowned.

IN THE SISTINE CHAPEL

THERE are who bay at Michael Angelo
For sibyl synod and Last Judgment wall;
That here Art's petty barriers were all
Swept forth in a soul's passionate overflow.
Once more the vale idolatrous below
Echoed with crash of hurled-forth tablet's fall:
Fair Florence quenched, and Italy a thrall,
What wonder, if his brush bespake the throe!
Yet here is more than wrath: on art, the height,
Wherefrom his wept-o'er country he surveyed
In the lone evening of oncoming gloom,
His spirit drank renewal,—yet afraid
With Presence dread, Whose shadow passeth light:
Lo, intermingled prophecy with doom!

ITALY

THIS beauteous land that fate hath without stint
So richly dowered,—what is it then to me?
Centuries of Madonna rivalry,
Whereof the canvases to-day but hint;
Mosaic half-obliterate; coin from mint
Of vanished empire; saddest to recall,
Da Vinci's masterpiece, a crumbling wall;
Of perished beauty here and there a glint?
Even so: yet woe were me, did I not awe
Responsive, where once fingers touched the keys
Of the soul's fine potentialities;
Were power denied to pierce beneath the sere
And melancholy waste, the while I saw
Eternity in Indian summer here.

THE AGE OF REASON

"O voi che avete gl' intelletti sani,
Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
Sotto il velame degli versi strani."

DANTE.

SPAKE Earth: "I tire of dreaming, let me think!"
And God stayed Soul, the singing bird, he meant
For blue profundities,—beneath which tent
Planets, and man as in some little chink;
And let Mind arrow forth from heavenly brink
Instead,—the falcon, Mind, winged hound with scent
For slaughter only, bleeding limbs and rent:
And flesh grew plenteous and sanguine drink.
Still up and down the universe was searched
For quarry, bosky dell and morn-thrilled height,
Given o'er to beak-and-talon's law supreme;
Till Beauty, even Truth, like thing besmirched,
Had fled from day and caved itself in night:
Cried Earth: "I loathe to think! Oh, let me dream!"

THE FUTURE

STILL giant Wrong stands boastful and elate:
But ominously laughs the Brook of Fate,
And History breathless hears it polishing
Five pebbles for some epoch-marking sling.

RENAISSANCE

SING me the wild dithyrambics of Doing,
Dance me a dance that wine-god before;
Chorus me joy o'er the world's renewing,—
Chaos the less and order the more!
Heart for dreaming hath drawn the wages,
Mind with scheming failed to fulfil:
Now for a fire flashed midmost the ages!
Usher me in Promethean Will!

Bowl me a Deed down the echoing era
Into the ninepin system of things.
Let them squabble, Zeus with his Hera,
So but Troy with the battle-cry rings.
Let them laugh their unquenchable laughter
O'er a limping divinity: he
Builded them thrones and arched them with rafter:
Vulcan, Vulcan, the god for me!

Wheresoever the burden is lifted,
And borne aloft with a heart of song;
Forest of error by new truth rifted;
Forum swayed by a pebble-trained tongue;
Triumph of mart or triumph of ploughshare;
Right more sovereign for wrong dispossessed—
Do we not enter into and now share
The Promised Land of our desert quest?

Hangers of harps on willows of weeping,—
For the razed City with turret and gate
Sitting in sackcloth and ashes, and keeping
The old fast-days of your bygone state—
Was it so easy taming the Lion
Of Judah with hunter's arrow and spear?
Make your Babylon into a Zion,
Resurrect your Jerusalem here!

O the heavens of unharvested spaces!
O the depths of still unfathomed truth!
How stand we in the market-places,
Pleading our "None hath hired us, forsooth!"
O the law and the prophets' Upsumming,
Hoped for by many nor wrought for by few!—
Speed me, speed me, thy Kingdom's coming,
Spirit that makest all things New!

THE FOUNDRY

ENCOILED in rails, that all confusedly
Run crisscross in and out its iron gates;
Topped with huge chimneys, grim duumvirates
That hold with legionry of smoke in fee
A drab suburban world; incredibly
Shapeless throughout its pyramidic vast;
Tri-daily in an air-convulsing blast
Articulate like Doom to things that be—
The foundry! Geyser bursts of steam by day,
And hells of flame by night! The incarnate Age—
Midwife to what Cyclopean births?—behold!
What means this more than Oriental sway
O'er Nature? Golden image, despot rage,
The Babylonian furnace fired sevenfold?

THE NIGHT EXPRESS

IT comes at nightfall, serpentine and lithe,
Descried afar; and stings with headlight fangs
The unsuspecting dark, whose shadows writhe
Quivering as if griped with mortal pangs.

Uncoiling from a town's incipient sleep,
It shoots into the night with dragon thunder:
Plains totter; ebon hills that stand like sheep,
Huddled in fright, make haste to spring asunder.

Sometimes when on my dormitory panes
Cloud-alien lightnings from its furnace flare,
I see the and one mass of wriggling trains,
And fury-like the globe with snaky hair;

And quail amid the universal hiss,
Till, gazing up toward reappearing skies,
I think how some far-off Metropolis
Will charm these pythons with her morning eyes.

SUCCESS

I AM grown a sullen deaf-mute and blind
To the Music of things and the Glory;
Won is the kingdom for which I have pined:
Sleep-walking, my hands are gory.
I feed me on triumphs each morning afresh,
For slaughter but waxing the fatter;
My birthright I sold for a pottage of flesh,
And bartered spirit for matter.

I ply my task from morning till eve
With hire as the sole inspiration;
No bursting sigh from the depths I heave
O'er a golden-winged flown Occasion.
Earthward crouching, I who was shod
And girt for the Mountain of Vision
Chose to become a hind of the clod
In a moment of ghastly decision.

I think him successful who through wiles and schemes
Without shock or smart through life passes;
I have cut down the primeval Forest of Dreams,
And made lawns and sown silken grasses.
I go about prim and in perfect attire
According to dictates of fashion:
But where are the ancient veins that were fire?
Where is the heart that was passion?

I give an unstinted support to a Cause
Whose patrons are Wealth and proud Beauty;
I reach out my hand for the coin of applause
At the simple doing of duty.
Bound and blinded and shorn of lock,
I hear the Philistine laughter,
And I bring not down with an earthquake shock
Column and pillar and rafter.

Yea, the anchor rests 'neath a tropical growth,
And clouds float white o'er the haven:
'T were better to be where the skies are wroth,
And black as the wings of a raven.
Not he afloat on a fragment of wreck,
With life alone left him to cherish,
'T is I should cry from my blast-safe deck:
"Lord, have mercy upon me, I perish!"

SANS EVERYTHING

WITH wickless eyes he sits: the oil that feeds
Our seeing doth in him no longer flow;
And age hath wholly quenched his bosom's glow,
And strewn his head with ashes of dead gleeds.
His shrivelled self within no longer heeds
What things betide in days that come and go:
Ah me! that lavish Nature should not know
How sorely the great boon of death he needs.
Not they who, fallen in battle fray, embark
Amid veiled queens—the old in deeds, not years—
Should call the words of pity from our lips;
But they who sit thus long immured in dark
And deedless dotage, after the eclipse
Of power—this is pathos, theme for tears.

CLASS REUNION

THREE lustrums linked together by the years,
With intermingled yesterdays that seem
Like Sabbath in this retrospective hour;
Or like some landscape dedicate to dream,
Gazed back upon from toilsome heights that tower
To where the sky appears.

(The climber stands there with suspended will,
And thrills to the sweet pastoral vale below,
The flocks, the homes, the vesper-bell—although
Behind him looms the topless journey still.)

Three lustrums! . . . How the heart were fain to range
In revery, and in silence steal away
Into the Past, if so it could awake
The perished magic of an earlier day!
Yet what boot dreams that only serve to make
More poignant change as change?
This festal hour it were more meet to sing
The high endeavor and the noble end
Than falter like a mourning-dove, and send
An alien note into the joy of spring.

As one who made fulfilment of his vow
By spurring forth full-armed in knightly quest,
We heard the spirit's clarion call to act,
Nor with less ardor thrilled to its behest.
To mate the inward dream with outward fact,
That 's our life's business now!
That time of morning ere the fray and din,
Youth's brief romance—could thought of it abate
One martial impulse in the hour of Fate,
Be it to us as though it had not been!

But no! we need not fence us from the Past,
More steadily to fix a wavering gaze
On duty: less divinely doth he mould
His fate whose heart beyond immediate days
Abroad in fields of memory hath not strolled.
What though our lot be cast
In strenuous places and the soul is strong?
'T is from the flower that must come the fruit,
In softest ether do the stars take root,
And quiet brooding is the womb of Song!

Life's guerdon this, and this, its cause for thanks,
To have known friends, and made one's heart a scroll
For Love's illumination and sweet lore;
To have kept solemn feast-days in the soul

For those of earlier days who are no more;
To have been one in the ranks
Of battle, too impetuous and wild,
When, in the very hour of mortal loss,
The blundering mad old World that fathered us
Became another Lear and blessed its child.

Ay, guerdon all enough for drawing breath,
Betimes to have felt a shiver without name
At Truth's electric leap 'twixt mind and heart;
To have seen Beauty whereat speech became
Like a little currency in some great mart;
To have surmised in Death
The Spirit's lilac-time, and known Life's noon
And midnight to the dateless soul are one,—
This with its fierce autocracy of sun,
That with its stars and tentative new moon.

And even that wondrous season when the soul,
Crowding the sparse five windows of the flesh,
Looked forth upon the universe in glad
Discovery, and beheld it in its fresh
Young May-tide, wherein earth was greenly clad,
But preluded the whole
Of summer: while from scene to scene we shift,
The pageantry grows less, the meaning more;

Something we glimpse in life not seen before,
If Spirit be the chorus of its drift.

How things harangue us that the world's not God's!
Yet this is manhood's victory and crown,
Plunging itself soul-foremost into deed,
To feel, though men despitefully may frown
On Faith with its uncalculating creed,
The universe applauds.
Yea, still to trust, though it elude man's wit,
A Purpose all-divine itself fulfils
Amid the hurtle and the clash of wills
Which make up history, written and unwrit.

INTIMATIONS

MY life with arbutus is fragrant,
Beneath the dead leaves of desire,
A fragile and tremulous fire;
While flutes a first bird of hope, vagrant
Till to nest, yet unbuilt, it cling:
My life with arbutus is fragrant,
That heralds the coming of spring.

My life is all rose and lily,
Like passion and saintliness blent:
Oh, the long and toilsome ascent
For the outlook, vistaed and stilly,
Dawn-fathered and mothered of moon!
My life is all rose and lily,
Betokening summer's high noon.

My life hath put forth its asters,
As lids grow unconsciously wet;
As the first far toll of regret
For Fate that all things overmasters,
Ineffably poignant and strange:
My life hath put forth its asters,
Portending autumnal change.

MY HEART IS A MURMURING SHELL

MY heart is a murmuring shell
From the Ocean of Song;
That echoes and dreams of the spell
And the charm that belong
To the moon-haunted surge and melodious swell.

In under-sea regions below
Long ago it was born;
It rode on the tide's ebb and flow,
And perchance it was worn
In the necklace of some lovely mermaid of snow.

Oh, would that once more it could view
Its nativity's Main!
And drink of her music anew,
And extinguish all pain
And all longing at last in her billows of blue!—

My heart is a murmuring shell
From the Ocean of Song;
That echoes and dreams of the spell
And the charm that belong
To the moon-haunted surge and melodious swell.

TOWARD LOVE, TOWARD DEATH

EVEN as a wharf
Wades out to meet ships,
Too eager to tarry
Their white-sailed incoming,
I have waded in dream
Toward Love, toward Death.

Youth had not learned
From the burgeoning bud
To thrill into leaf
The sap of its ardor,
Ere lit on its bough
Singing foreknowledge,
Wingèd prevision,
Fledged with the dawn,
That somewhere in soft
White girlhood unfolding,
Arbutus-like
Enkindled in snow,

Was the grace, was the beauty,
Immaculate wonder,
Reticent loveliness,
Fern-shy worth;
That somewhere were lips
So moulded for music,
Language was melody,
Breath a song.
And theirs was the call,
Wafted at daybreak,
Wafted at nightfall,
I felt as a palm
Commingle with palm—
I heard and was led by
Toward the predestined
Love!

To-night as I drained
Sun's wine from my casement,
Ayearn for the moon
With a million-leaved thirst;
Out of the stillness
Evening is vaulted with,
Out of the trance
That ripens the dew,

Came a rich, a strange
Intuition of gladness—
I sensed the future
As time unveiled:
And I knew that somewhere
In tilth or in fallowness,
Mine by the right
That Clay has to clay,
Is a nook recessed
From the onset of highways,
A world retreat
Into infinite lull. . . .
And there while eternities
Cloud-like drift by,
I shall mesh me about
With swaying night grasses;
There sink me a well
For waters of sleep,
And fill my beaker
With cool oblivion,—
Brim my beaker
With Death!

Even as a shoal
Strains up from the deep,

Eager, eager,
To stay swift keels,
I have strained up in dream
Toward Love, toward Death.

REEFS

SOMEWHERE far out and away, the sea
Coiled for another tidal spring;
And reefs, for a little respite, free
From the hiss of waters and briny sting!

Pit-faced reefs, many-eyed with pools,
Each a Laocoön of the deep:
Last night, where this morning's quiet rules,
Every wave that smote was a geyser's leap.

Just to be reannexed by the sun,
Under the sky's oblivious blue,
In the lull 'twixt passion at end and begun,
Ah, the python nights they have struggled through!

DISILLUSION

CLIFFS untranslated into sand,
Surf-buffed a thousand days and nights,
Alternate 'twixt the sea and land
At the tide's gradual will of depths and heights.

Afar a lone white-turbaned ship!
And fraught with its measure of quest, no doubt:
Oh, the main is a quivering lip,
And its waves are the thoughts past finding out!—

My task, adamant as before
To the bosom that ebbd away into mist,
Baffled by unsundered shore!—
But yawn not seas daily with unground grist?

IN LASSITUDE 'NEATH HEIGHTS UNWON

I N lassitude 'neath heights unwon,
Aghast at how the years are few,
Contrasting with the little done,
The infinite to do,

I sometimes leave the doubt unchid
That, questioning life's ulterior good,
From all too vasty aims would rid
Much jaded flesh and blood;

Until as one whom dreams appall,
I start and spring to tasks that halt,
In terror lest my days be all
Cast forth,—lack-savor salt!

SINGING ROBES

THERE 'S a garment of music my soul is wearing,
Richer than aught from the many-fleeced sea;
Woven from struggle, defeat, and daring,
And all that I yearned for but could not be.

How could the heart foresee in its clinging
To dreams that vaunted success with each breath
From them would come such a web of singing,
Silken and wondrous, to epitaph death?

How foresee every thread of my singer's
Mantle Beautiful, spirit's fine veil,
Was to be spun by ethereal fingers
At the heavenly vanishing-point of the Grail?

Softer than sinuous mist and more subtle
Than heat in summer's upquivering air:
The hand of a woman guided the shuttle
That wrought the robes of singing I wear.

INCOGNITO

LIKE to some medieval Jew who stole
With stealthy steps along the thoroughfare,
In tatters clad, unkempt, and bent with care,—
A creature snare-beset that sought its hole;
Until, the hovel reached, his journey's goal,
In halls of loveliness beyond compare,
He doffed the purple-hiding rags, and there
Stood forth a king in body and in soul,—
I steal unnoticed through life's busy mart,
And pass disguised through haunts of woe and crime;
The beggar garb belies my having part
In all the wondrous affluence of Time:
But oh, when I withdraw within my heart,
And tear the untrue selves from Self sublime !

SONG

MY life is but a little moss
Upon the granite grown,
Yet visions of the glorious
And lovely it hath known;
It too hath dreamt things beauteous
In slumbering on a stone.

My life is but a bush that shed
Its blooms on autumn's lap,
And yet it knows in times ahead
New miracles will hap,
When into fairer roses red
'T will coin its welling sap.

My life is but a cloud that flecked
A little sky with white,
And lingering for a space was decked
In sunset colors bright;
Then sank, a wraith of mist, nor recked
Of being forgotten quite.

SIFT ME, O DEATH

SIFT me, O Death, sift out the fine white flour
Of my true Self for the communion bread
Of memory; lest Love anhungered faint,
When I am laid in the lone garden tomb.

Strain me, O Death, strain from my cluster of years
The eucharistic wine that Love may drink,
And so dream back, not me, but the Christ in me,
In the still phantom years when I am dead.

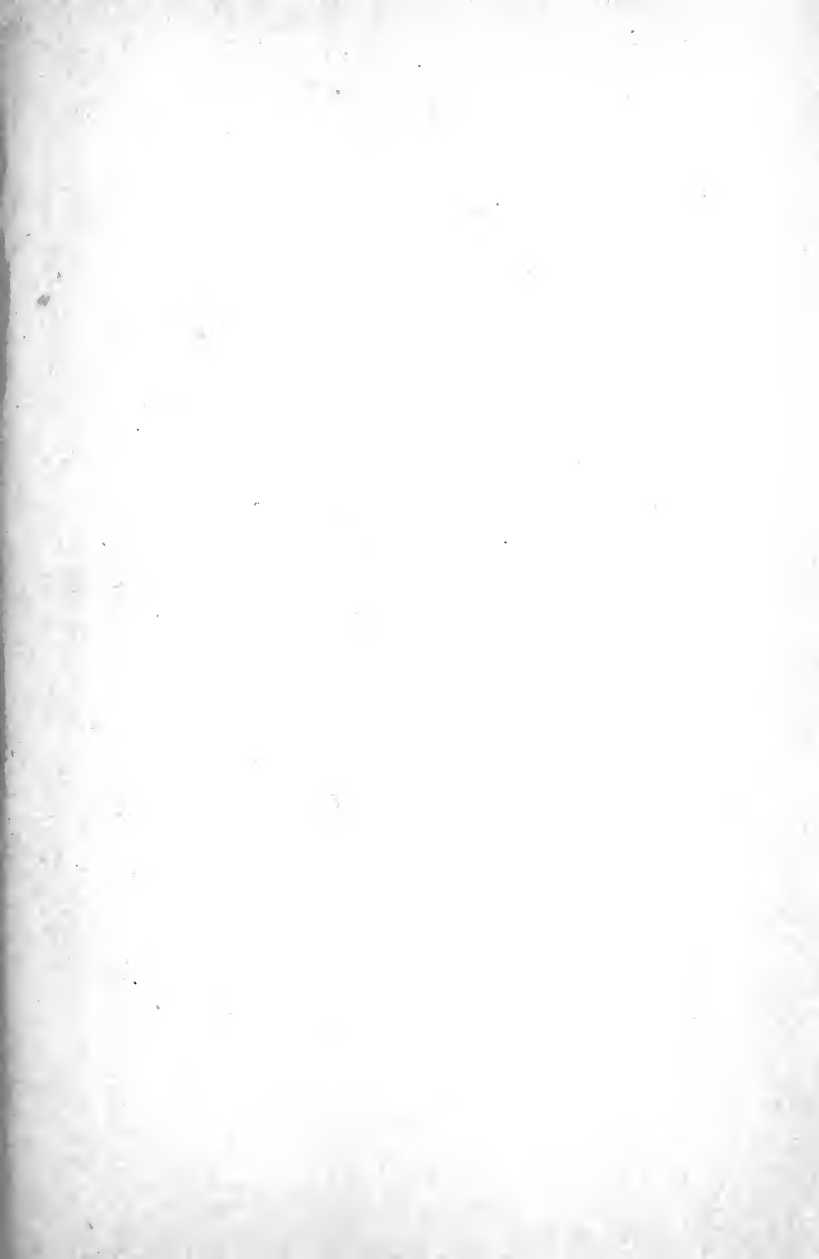
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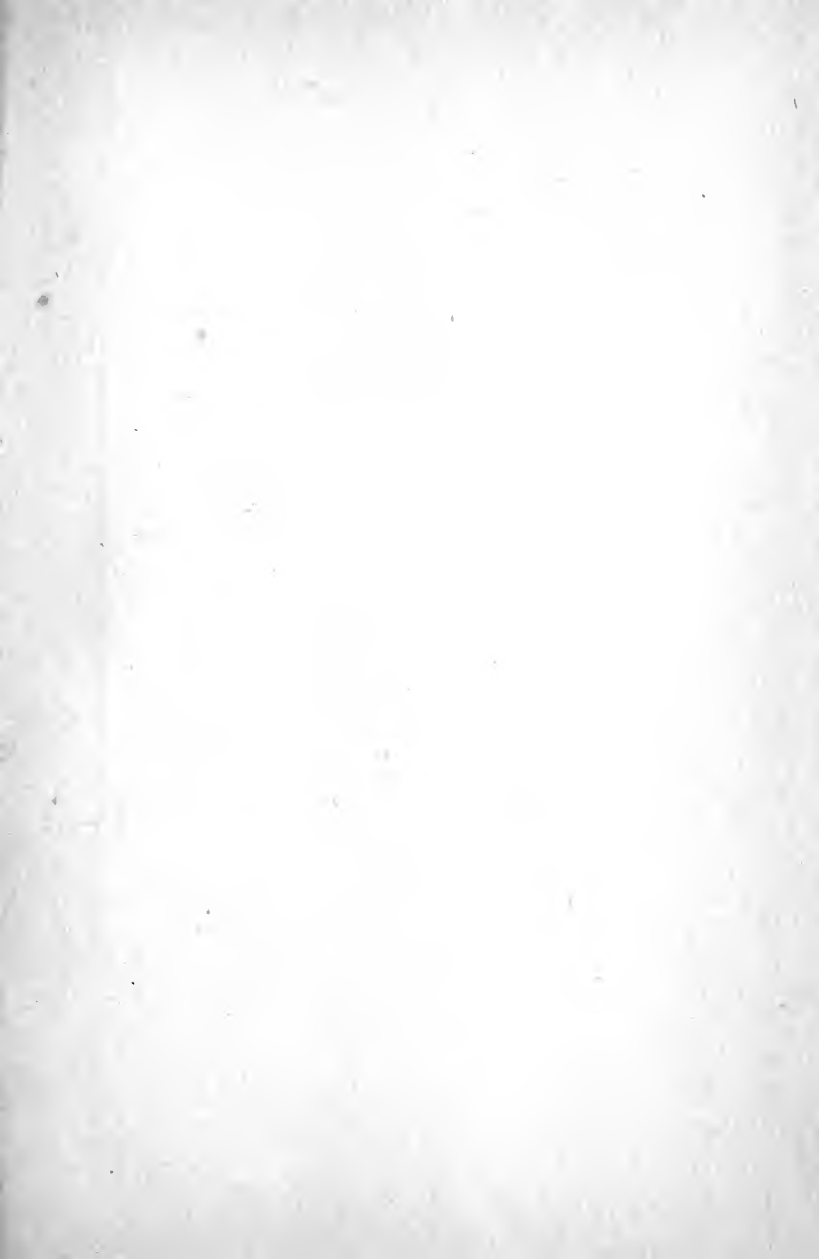
AS when a spouse, who sees his barren mate
Fondle an alien babe which smiling melts
All the potential mother in her breast,
Doth smother a sigh, unwilling to revoke
The momentary Madonna,—in such wise
Tenderly Life forbore with me who lingered
With Song, divinest elfin child of Dream. . . .
Nor Rachel-like have I cried out 'gainst Fate;
Yet wheresoever wandering I beheld
Sweet, virgin-mothered Song, that made the heart
Forget the ache of uncreativity,—
Aface with the Ideal made flesh I felt:
“Blessed the womb, conceived and brought thee forth,
Blessed, blessed, the breasts that gave thee suck!”

WAITING

MOON-enamelled waters under,
Lies a shell with spire and whorl,
Murmuring in doubt and wonder:
"Shall I e'er secrete a Pearl?"

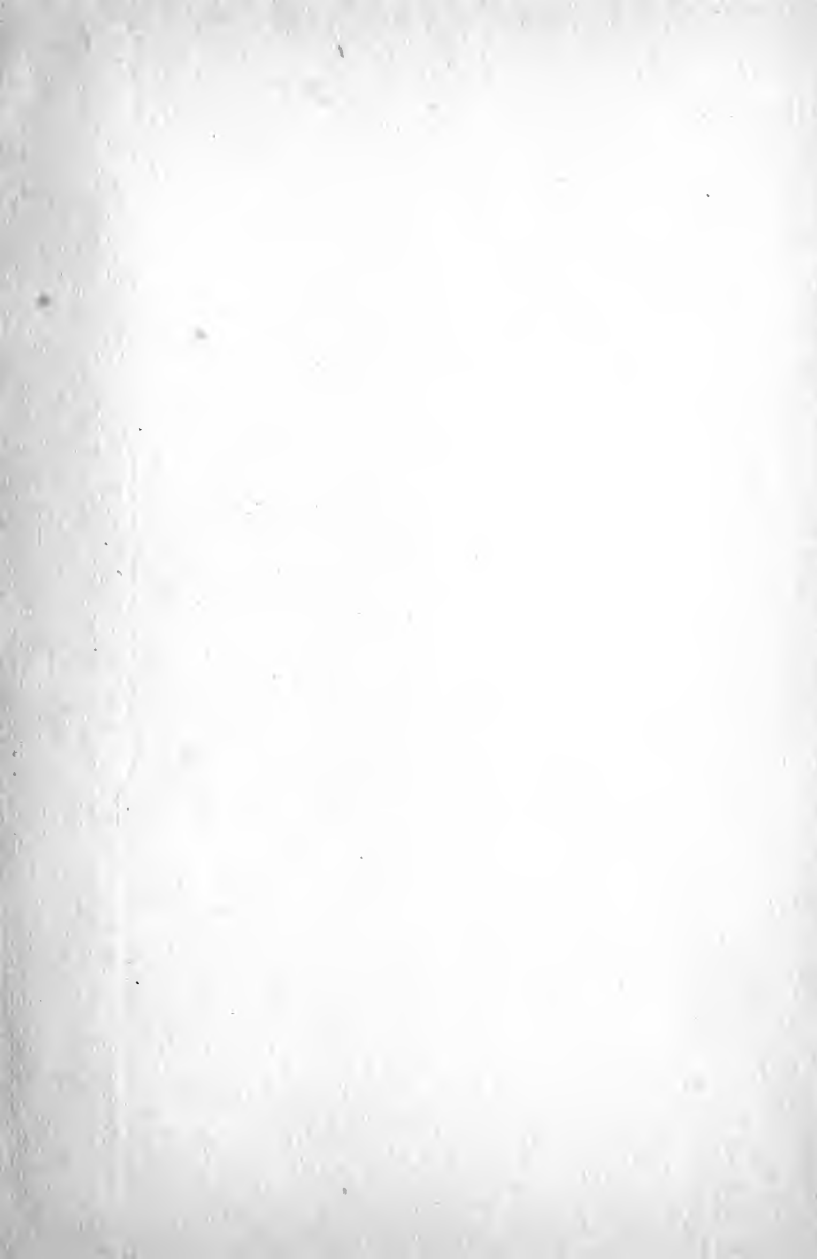






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